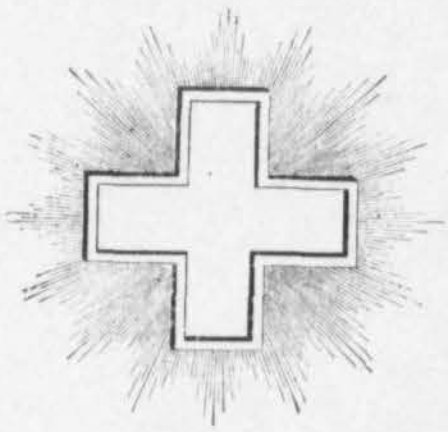

St. Leo's Church

Souvenir

of the

Golden Jubilee

of

St. Leo's Church

1881 =:= 1931

Dedication

of

St. Leo's

New Parochial School and Convent

NOVEMBER 29, 1931

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2. STAR SPANGLED BANNER . . . . . School Children
3. INTRODUCTORY . . . . . Hon. Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr., President of Committee.
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5. ACCEPTANCE . . . . . His Excellency Michael J. Curley, Archbishop of Baltimore.
6. HON. ALBERT C. RITCHIE, Governor of Maryland.
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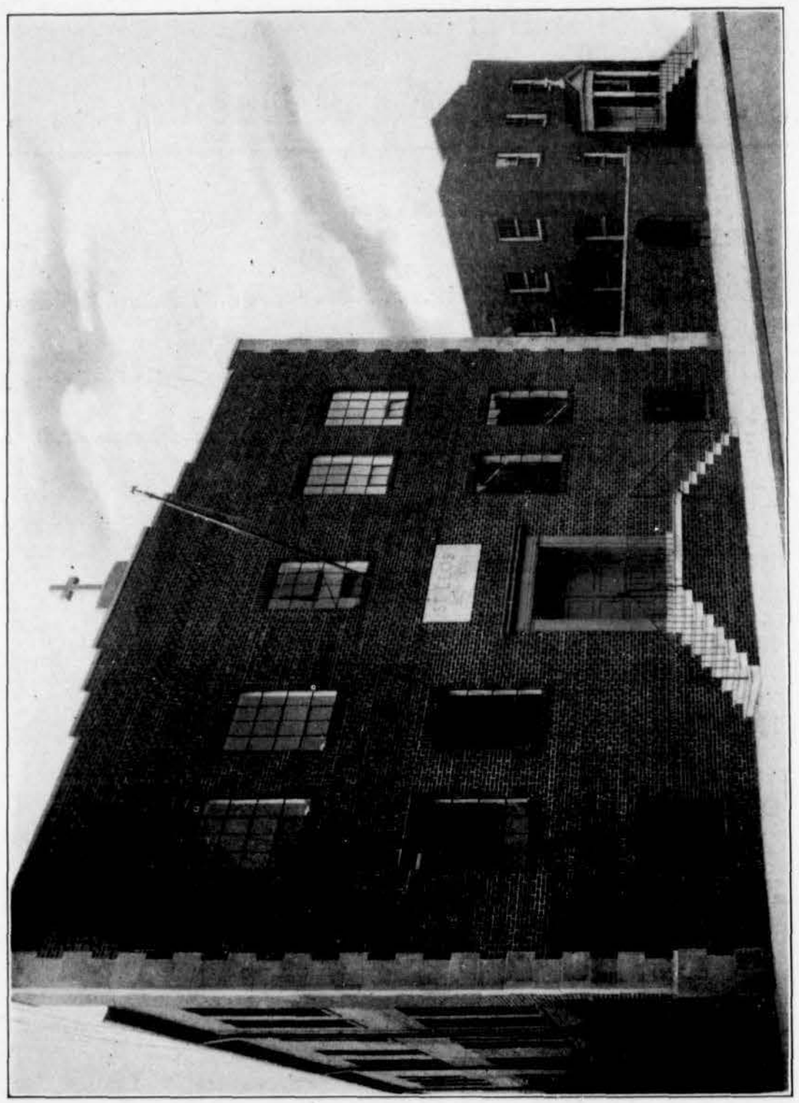


ST. LEO'S SCHOOL

FOREWORD

With great pleasure I present this "Souvenir" of St. Leo's New Parochial School and of the Golden Jubilee of St. Leo's, the first Italian Church in Baltimore. To all the Parishioners the erection of a much needed new School during the Anniversary year was the most appropriate manner of celebrating the event. It is true our congregation is one of very limited means and it was gratifying to learn that an undertaking such as was entered upon was made a reality by the generous response of the poor people of dear old St. Leo's. I wish to extend my deepest appreciation to all who have labored with me and who have shown their interest by financial help. May God bestow His choicest blessings upon all of you and your dear ones.

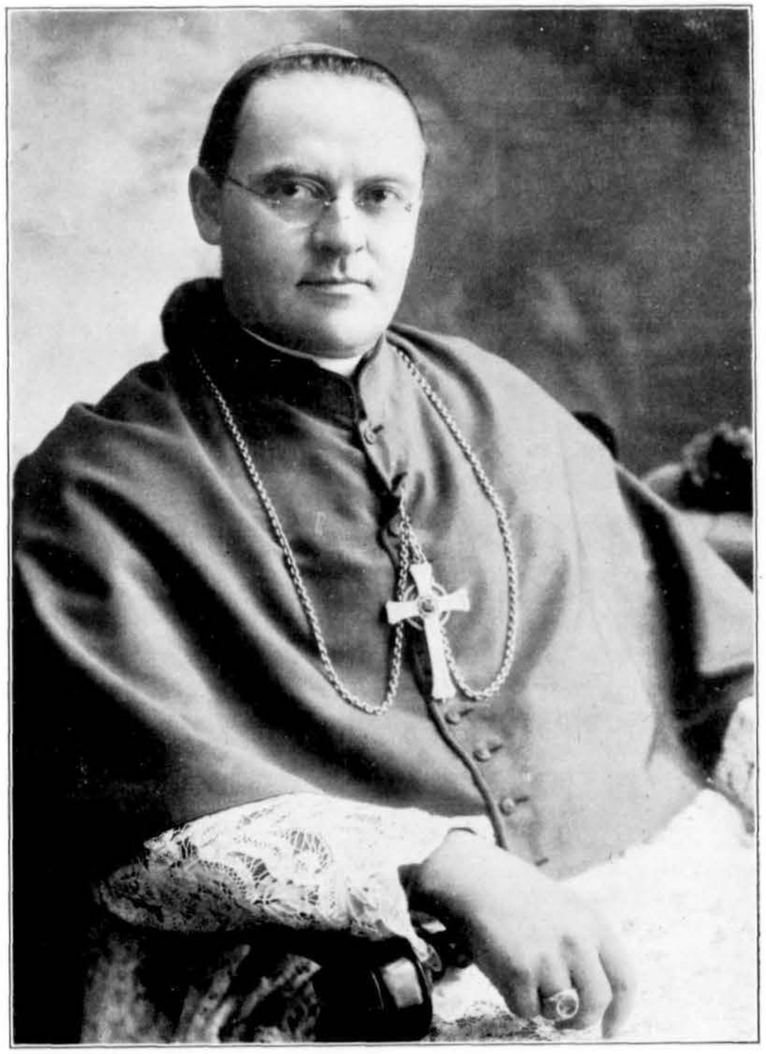
May this "Souvenir" remind you of the faithful cooperation of the members of St. Leo's during the fifty years of its existence and may this cooperation continue in the future so that together we may humbly praise God for the past and seek His blessings for the future.

For the little time that I have been among you I have tried, in my humble way, to please you, and expect to carry on the good work which was so nobly started by Father Andreis, a half century ago, followed by other pastors of St. Leo's.

In conclusion, I again urge all my Parishioners to continue their good work and at the same time maintain their loyalty to our Church which will be the best guarantee for its future welfare.

REV. HECTOR MESSINA, P.S.M.,
Pastor.

HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS XI



HIS EXCELLENCY MICHAEL J. CURLEY
Archbishop of Baltimore

To whom we are indebted and who by his advise and assistance has helped us in our humble endeavors to make St. Leo's a model Italian Parish, worthy of its great Patron and worthy of this glorious Archdiocese. . .

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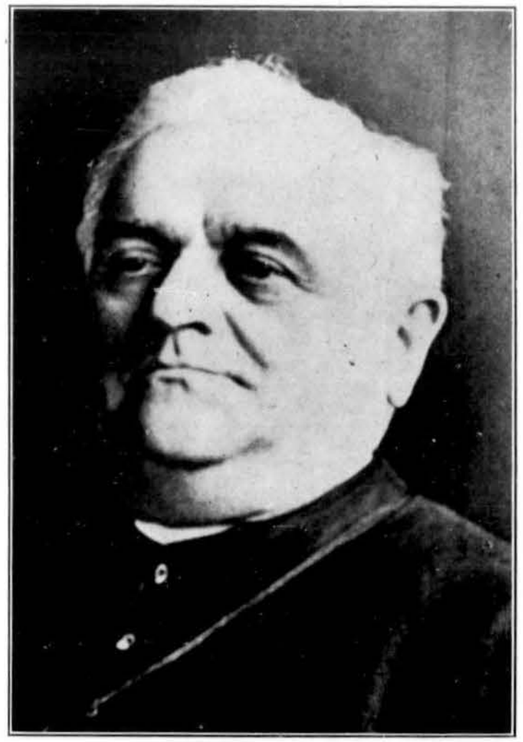

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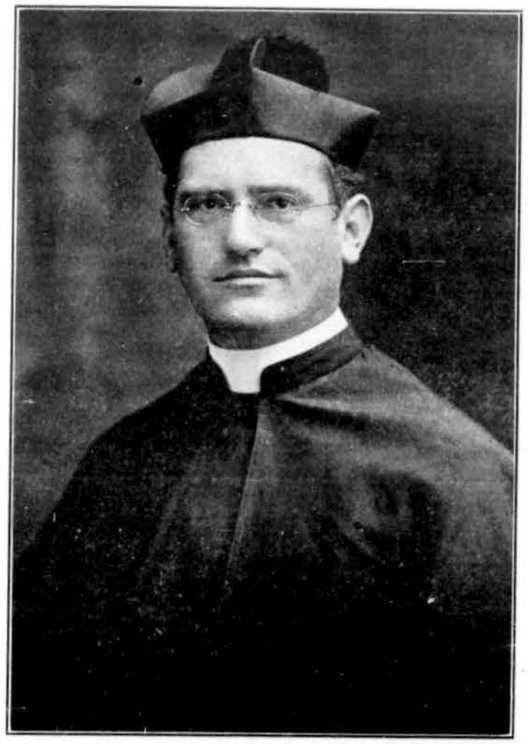

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ST. LEO'S SCHOOL

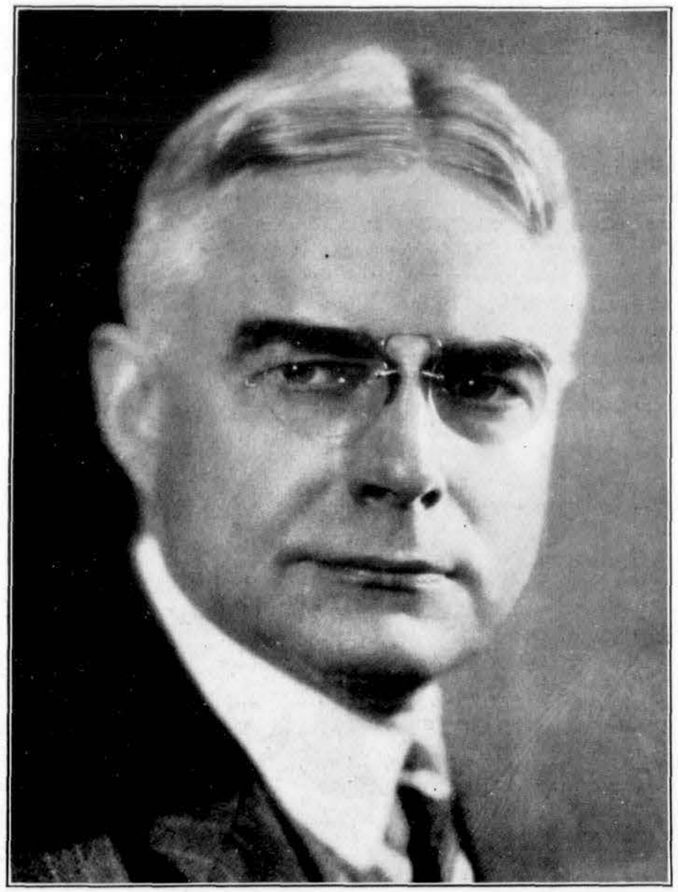
After St. Leo's parish had been established a little over a year Father Andreis realized that a parochial school was of utmost importance in order to succeed in his good work; therefore, in September, 1882, St. Leo's School was first opened with three lay teachers as instructors. A year later, in 1883, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, assumed charge with Sister Mary Margaret as Superioress. The Sisters have been in charge ever since and untold good has been done by them in giving the boys and girls of St. Leo's a solid and thorough Christian education. In 1909, when the Pallottini Fathers took charge of the parish, there were 250 pupils on the roll, since then the number has steadily increased. Notwithstanding the numerous difficulties with which the parish has been contending the school has always maintained a high standard. At this time considerable repairs were required in the school, especially to accommodate the increasing number of pupils. Therefore, in 1910 Father Riedel, who was pastor at the time, arranged to have the children taught at St. Vincent's, 112 North Front Street, the present quarters of St. Leo's Italian Orphan Asylum. After four years the children were moved back to Stiles Street into a remodeled school, at the blessing of which our late lamented Cardinal Gibbons addressed the people of St. Leo's and expressed his belief in the future success of the parish and school.

ST. LEO'S NEW BUILDING COMMITTEE

Reading from left to right.

Sitting—Frank Corasaniti, Assistant Treasurer; Frank Angelozzi, Assistant Treasurer; Rev. Hector Messina, P.S.M., Treasurer; Hon. Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr., President; Pio Marocco, Vice-President; Felice Cardegna.

Standing—Joseph Schiavetti, Financial Secretary; Vincent Ferraracci; Rocco Marino, Vice-President; Frank A. Cardegna, Recording Secretary; Frank Marine.



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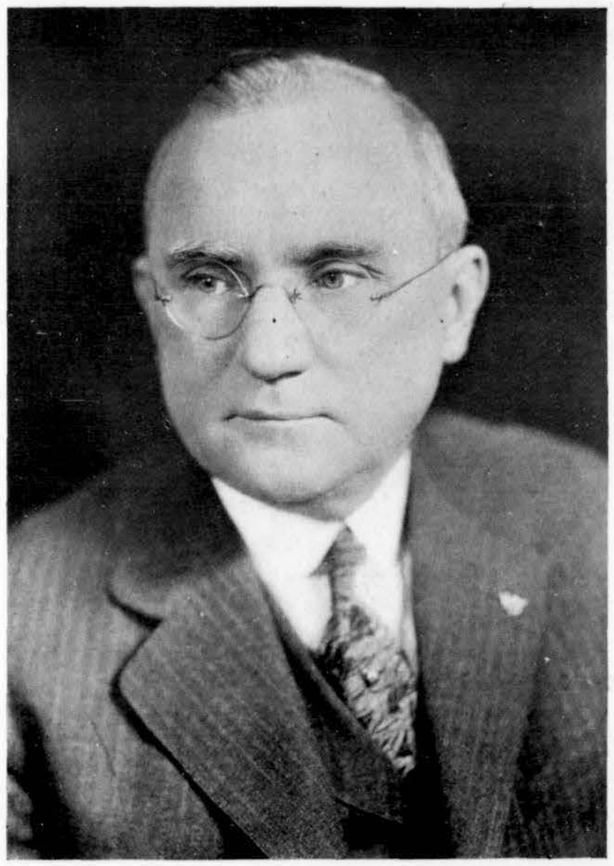
Governor of Maryland



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The number of scholars increased gradually and in 1922 there were 252 boys and 229 girls on the roll. The class rooms now became too small, were badly in need of repairs and modernization, and in the early part of 1930 a cry of "We need a new school" was heard throughout the parish.

At the regular meeting of St. Leo's Confraternity held in February, the members petitioned Father Messina to start negotiations for the erection of a new School and Convent. Father Messina, who at the time had been pastor only a few months, was somewhat reluctant account of not being familiar with the people; but, inspired by the enthusiasm displayed by some of the parishioners, he consented to discuss the idea with His Excellency, Archbishop Curley. Approval was obtained to proceed with the idea, and immediately a meeting of the outstanding members of the parish was called to discuss plans of the New School and to formulate methods of obtaining the necessary funds. At this meeting, held March 4th, the following committee was appointed: Rev. Ettore Messina, treasurer; Hon. Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr., president; Mr. Pio Marocco, 1st vice-president; Mr. Rocco Marino, 2nd vice-president; Mr. Frank A. Cardegna, recording secretary; Mr. Joseph Schiavetti, financial secretary; Messrs. Frank Angelozzi and Frank Corasaniti, assistant treasurers; sometime later Mr. Frank Marino was appointed as a member of the Committee.

Many meetings were held by this Committee to work out all the necessary details and to overcome the many obstacles that are encountered in an undertaking of this kind. Some of the members of the Committee accompanied by the Pastor made a door to door campaign of the parish and although very discouraging at times, this was overcome by the generous reception they received from the faithful people of the parish. Messrs. Nicholas Schiavetti and Maurizio Dell'Uomo helped the Committee in this work. In the meantime a special meeting was called for the purpose of obtaining funds and to which all the prominent Italians of Baltimore were invited. Considering the small attendance at this meeting, the amount pledged was sure gratifying and encouraging, enabling the Committee to proceed with their plans. Most of these pledges at this time have been paid. To collect the subscription made by the parishioners a great number of which had agreed to make weekly payments, the young ladies of the Blessed Virgin Sodality volunteered. They were divided into three groups as follows:

Miss Fannie Della Vecchio, Captain	Mrs. Anna Rinaldi, Captain	Mrs. Jessie Granese, Captain
Miss Mary Romeo	Miss Rose Principe	Miss Angelina Principio
Miss Angelina Bertorelle	Miss Nettie Di Liello	Miss Maurie Mugavero
Miss Helen Popoli	Miss Anna Petti	Miss Fannie Bruno
Miss Marie Patti	Miss Rose Rossi	Miss Florence Popoli
Miss Josephine Lazzatti		Miss Madeline Yori

The tedious task of recording the collections and keeping account of the funds was given to Mr. Joseph Schiavetti, who has devoted a great amou of his time to this task, being assisted by his son Master Joseph Schiavetti, j..

To carry out their plans the Committee acquired additional property adjacent to the school and great effort was made to complete the school during the summer of 1930. Therefore, School was closed during the latter

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Sitting—Miss Florence Popoli, Miss Mannie Mugavero, Mrs. Jessie Granese, Miss Fannie Della Vecchia, Mrs. Anna Rinaldi, Miss Angeline Bertorelli, Miss Anna Petti.

Standing—Miss Angelina Principio, Miss Fannie Bruno, Miss Madeline Yori, Miss Rose Principe, Miss Mary Patti, Miss Nettie Di Liello.

part of May and the buildings including the well-known St. Leo's Gymnasium were razed. Due to unforeseen complications that arose at this time it was necessary to delay the building of the new school and convent until the spring of 1931, work being started on St. Leo's Day, April 11th.

The children were taught in temporary quarters for the school term of 1930-1931.

The architect preparing the plans was Mr. Cyril E. Hebrank, who came to the Committee highly recommended and the builder to whom the contract was awarded was Mr. Frank Marino. These two gentlemen both deserve a great deal of credit for the wonderful work they performed.

The New School was ready for occupancy in September without any delay to the children. The enrollment at the beginning of the term was 400 pupils.

When it is taken into consideration that this project was started without any funds whatsoever, depending only on the good will and faithful promise of the parishioners of dear old St. Leo's, unlimited credited should be given to Father Messina who labored unceasingly; to the members of the Committee who devoted a great amount of their time; to the young ladies who untiringly go out week after week to collect the pledges, and lastly but not the least, to the poor people of St. Leo's who so nobly responded with their financial assistance.

It is hoped that the cooperation that has manifested itself in the past two years will continue in the future in order that all of us who have started this task may see it through to completion by paying off the remaining debt.

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ST. LEO'S CHURCH

The Church and Its Pastors

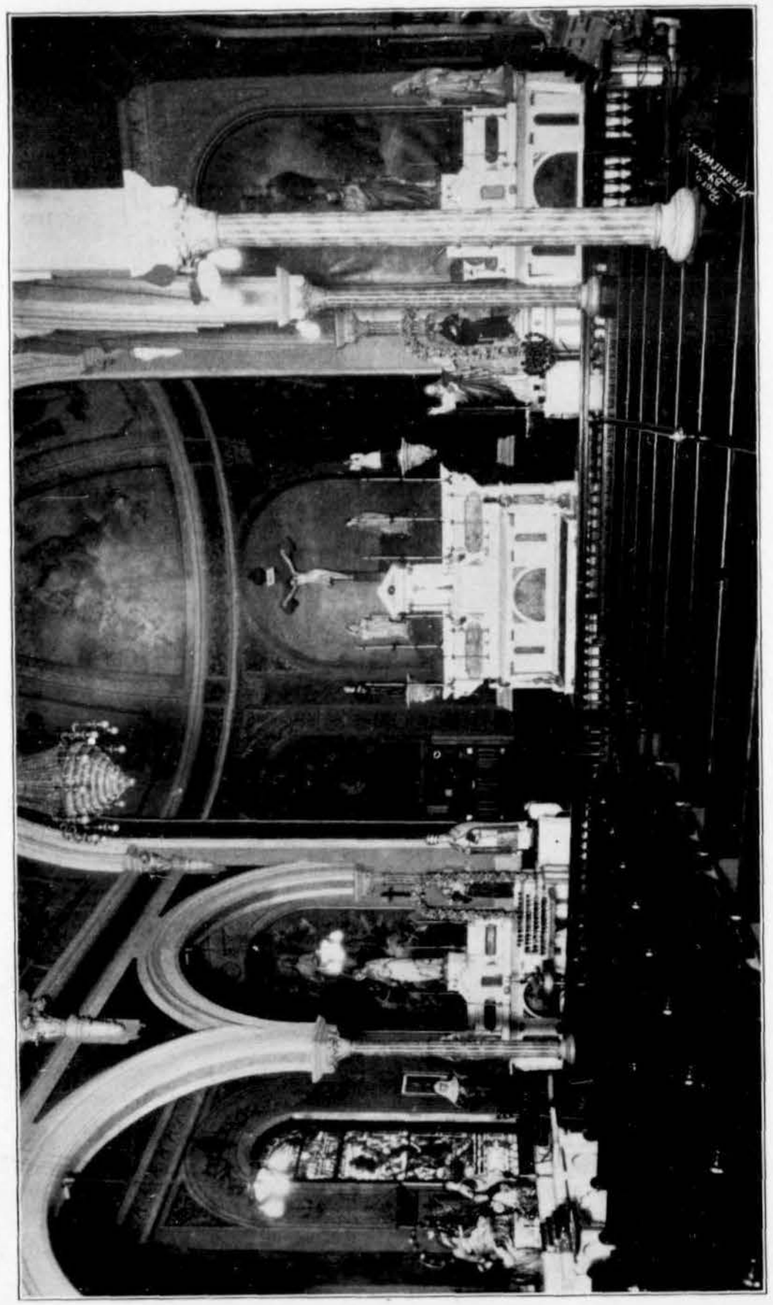
On Sunday, September 12, 1880, the cornerstone of St. Leo's was laid by His Grace Archbishop Gibbons at that time not yet created a Cardinal. We had long wished to see a church built for the Italians of the city, as their number was gradually increasing. The greater part of them, however, had made their homes in the southeastern section of the city, where St. Leo's now stands, and this he judged the proper location. Having come to a decision in the matter, he appointed Rev. Joseph Leo Andreis, then assistant pastor of St. Vincent's Church, and a native of Turin, Italy, to undertake the formation of a congregation. Owing to circumstances, Father Andreis, in order to accomplish the task of building the new church and, later on, the schools, so greatly needed, was obliged to incur a very heavy debt; so that the history of the church, in a money way, has been a long and great struggle, now, however, successfully brought to a conclusion.

After a vigorous campaign of collecting beforehand, the new church was finally begun. At the laying of the cornerstone, Archbishop Gibbons made an address to a great crowd of people, Catholic and Protestant alike, and an Italian address was delivered by Rev. Emilius de Augustinus, S. J. of Woodstock College. The occasion was one of great ceremony. A procession of all the Catholic societies of the city, forming at the City Hall and headed by many priests and the French and Italian consuls, marched to St. Leo's and assisted at the ceremonies.

The first Mass was said at St. Leo's on January 23, 1881, in the basement, as the upper part of the church was still unfinished. Father Andreis was the celebrant. In the afternoon of the same day, Vespers were sung, and at Benediction an ostensorium, blessed especially and sent to St. Leo's by Pope Leo XIII, was used.

Father Andreis had a large number of devoted American friends who wished to help him by taking seats at his church; but the Archbishop did not sanction this, as the church was intended for the Italians alone. This made the first year's struggle a very hard one, the number of Italians being as yet insufficient for the needs of the new parish. One year later, therefore, in September, 1881, St. Leo's was made a parish for both nationalities, and in the same month the completed edifice was dedicated and the altar removed to the upper floor of the church. On the Sunday of dedication, the new bell of the tower was also blessed.

St. Leo's now began to flourish, starting from a congregation of 100 Italians and 1,500 Americans. In 1883, the Calvary now above the high altar, and the handsome side paintings of the Immaculate Conception and St.



INTERIOR ST. LEO'S CHURCH

Joseph, the work of Gamba of Turin, painter to the King of Italy, were brought from a trip home to Europe by Father Andreis. The beautiful fresco work of the church was done in October, 1887, by H. Foresti and V. Orlando, and renewed by the same artists in the year 1910, through the kindness of Mr. A. Lanasa.

Father Andreis died in July, 1903. He was succeeded by Rev. Thomas Monteverde, who died in July, 1905. The third pastor was Father Pasquale di Paolo. The silver jubilee of St. Leo's was celebrated during this incumbency.

Father Joseph M. Riedel took charge of the parish in September, 1909. His assistants have been: Reverends Mario Catalono, D.D.; Peter Schroeder, P. S. M.; Joseph Gleisner, P. S. M.; August Braukmann, P. S. M.; Valentine Rumpel, P. S. M.; Albert Guido Spiesberger, P. S. M., and Henry Gerlen, P. S. M., D.D.

The foremost thought in the mind of Father Riedel was to pay off the debt on the church which was almost $21,000 at the time he assumed charge. Although afflicted with a chronic throat trouble which caused him much suffering Father Riedel undertook the task of relieving the church of this financial burden and by December, 1921, his efforts were rewarded when the report showed that the church was free of all debt.

Besides paying off the church debt other noteworthy achievements of Father Riedel were the founding of St. Leo's Italian Orphan Asylum, reopening of St. Leo's Gymnasium, the organizing of St. Leo's confraternity for men, the Christian Mothers for Women and the Children of Mary for Girls and Young Ladies. He took great interest in the boys and girls of the parish and formed a cadet corps and fife and drum corps for the boys; and organized a sewing class and a basketball team for the girls. After a lingering illness Father Riedel died April 2, 1925, during Holy Week. He was succeeded by Rev. Henry Gerlen, P. S. M., D.D., who remained until December 1, 1927, when Rev. Giovanni Benedetto, P. S. M., was appointed pastor. During the latter part of October 1928, Rev. Valentino Marino, P. S. M., succeeded Father Benedetto. Father Marino remained until December 18, 1929, when our present pastor Rev. Hector Messina, P. S. M., assumed charge. Although being pastor not quite two years Father Messina has shown that he is whole heartily interested in the welfare of the people of St. Leo's, and which has been manifested by the good work he has accomplished for the church and school. Father Messina is at present assisted by Rev. Anthony Alomia, P. S. M., Ph.D., and for the short while he has been with us has clearly demonstrated that he will be of great help to our pastor in administrating to the wants of the people of St. Leo's parish.

ST. LEO'S CONFRATERNITY

It is the duty of every Catholic man of the parish to become a member of St. Leo's Confraternity, a church society organized in 1919 to promote the spiritual welfare of its members and at the same time encourage and stimulate interest in all affairs held for the benefit of church and school.

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LA CHIESA DI S. LEONE

Ed I Suoi Pastori

Nella Domenica del 12 Settembre 1880 la prima pietra della chiesa di S. Leone fu messa da Sua Eccellenza, l'arcivescovo Gibbons, in quel tempo non ancora cardinale.

In questa solenne occasione egli dinanzi ad un pubblico folto e numeroso di cattolici e protestanti, pronunziò un magistrale discorso. Lo seguì in lingua italiana il Rev. Emilio D'Agostino S. J. del Collegio di Woodstock.

Dopo vi furono solenni cerimonie ed imponenti processioni col concorso di tutte le Società Cattoliche della città, che si riunirono in corteo dinanzi al Municipio, e preceduti da dignitari ecclesiastici e civili proseguirono sino alla Chiesa di S. Leone.

Il 23 Gennaio 1881 fu celebrata la prima Messa dal Rev. Padre Andreis nel basamento parchè la parte superiore dell'edificio era ancora in costruzione.

Nel pomeriggio dello stesso giorno furono cantati i Vespri con la benedizione dell'Ostensorio espressamente mandato da Sua Santità Papa Leone XIII.

Sua Eminenza fu sempre desideroso di veder sorgere una chiesa per gli italiani della città in vista del continuo aumento della colonia. Siccome la maggioranza di essa abitava nella parte South-eastern della città giudicò opportuno erigere la chiesa nel centro della suddetta località. Ciò che si fece dopo breve tempo. L'edificio non era pero' ancora in costruzione quando egli nomino' a pastore della chiesa il Rev. Joseph Leo Andreis, di Torino, già assistente della chiesa di S. Vincenzo.

Questo degno sacerdote rispose all'appello con entusiasmo e sin dai primi giorni ravviso' la necessità di connettere alla chiesa una scuola parrocchiale ma per mancanza di mezzi finanziari fu obbligato a contrarre un forte debito di $10,000 nel 1889.

Intanto molti fedeli americani cominciarono a frequentare la Chiesa e domandarono al pastore il permesso di avere delle sedie ma a questa richiesta si oppose l'Arcivescovo che voleva conservare alla chiesa una impronta tutta italiana. Nel 1881 la Chiesa fu fatta parrocchiale per tutte le nazionalità e nello stesso mese, portato a termine l'edificio, fu dedicato l'altare, che rimosso dal basamento fu riportato a suo posto. In quel giorno fu benedetta anche la nuova campana.

La congregazione di S. Leone in breve progredì con un numero di 900 italiani e 1500 americani.

Nel 1883 il Calvario che ora si trova più in alto dell'altare maggiore e le due splendide oleografie dell'Immacolata Concezione e di S. Giuseppe, capolavori dell'insigne pittore Gamba, di Torino e artista di casa reale, furono qui portate dall'Italia dal Reverendo Padre Andreis.

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L'affresco della Chiesa fu fatto nell'Ottobre 1887 e fu opera pregevole dei rinomati artisti Foresti ed Orlando che nel 1910 lo rinnovarono a spesa del Signor A. Lanasa.

Il Reve. Padre Andreis mori il 20 Luglio 1903 ed a lui successe il Rev. Tommaso Monteverde deceduto dopo breve tempo.

Il terzo pastore fu il Rev. padre Di Paola il quale ebbe l'onore di celebrare il giubileo d'argento della Chiesa di S. Leone.

Nel Settembre del 1909 il Rev. Joseph Riedel prese l'incarico della Chiesa ed ebbe a suoi assistenti il Rev. Mario Catalano D. D. il Rev. Pietro Schroeder P. S. M., il Rev. Giuseppe Gleisner P. S. M., il Rev. August Bauchmann P. S. M. il molto reverendo Valentino Rumpel P. S. M. il Rev. Alberto Guido Spiesberg, P. S. M., e il Rev. Enrico Gerlen, P. S. M., D. D.

Il primo pensiero che ebbe Padre Riedel, nell'assumere l'incarico, fu quello di pagare il debito di $21,000 che gravava sulla Chiesa. Quantunque travagliato da una malattia di gola, che gli reco' molte sofferenze, egli prese a cuore il delicato incarico di alleviare la Chiesa del pesante debito; cosi' nel Dicembre 1921 i suoi grandi sacrifizi furono coronati da un grande successo, e la Chiesa fu complemente liberata dal debito.

Pagato il debito Padre Riedel si dedico' tutto al miglioramento morale della Parrocchia, cosi' sotto la sua direzione venne fondato: l'Orfanatrofio Italiano di San Leone; venne riaperto il Gymnasium di San Leone; fu formata la Societa' delle Madri Cristiane, e la Societa' delle Figlie di Maria.

Piglio' ancora cura dei ragazzi e delle ragazze della Parrocchia, cosi' formo' un corpo di cadetti composto di alunni della Scuola di San Leone, e organizzo' un circolo femminile per imparare l'arte del cucire, ed un basket-ball team per le ragazze.

Dopo una lunga malattia Padre Riedel mori' nel giorno 2 Aprile 1925, durante la Settimana Santa. A lui successe il Rev. Enrico Gerlen, P. S. M., D. D., che rimase in carica fino al primo Dicembre 1927, quando fu data la cura della Parrocchia al Rev. Giovanni B. Benedetti, P. S. M. Nell'Ottobre del 1928 al Padre Benedetti successe come parroco il Rev. Valentino Marino, P. S. M., che rimase in carica fino al 18 Dicembre 1929, quando venne eletto parroco il Rev. Ettore Messina, P. S. M., attuale parroco di San Leone. In questi due brevi anni che Padre Messina sta in mezzo a noi, egli ha mostrato di essere interamente interessato per il benessere morale della Parrocchia. Egli ha messo a disposizione tutte le sue doti di mente e di cuore per il miglioramento della Parrocchia specialmente per l'erezione della nuova Scuola e del nuovo Convento. Attuale assistente di Padre Messina e' il Rev. Antonio Alomia, P. S. M., Ph.D., il quale, nel breve tempo che e' stato in mezzo a noi, ha chiaramente dimostrato, che egli sara' di grande aiuto al nostro Parroco nell'amministrazione della Parrocchia di San Leone, per il benessere materiale e morale del popolo di San Leone.

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